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080737Z Jun 01

2001HOCHI00688 - UNCLASSIFIED

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ACTION EAP-00

INFO	LOG-00	AID-00	AMAD-00	CIAE-00	INL-00	SRPP-00	EB-00
	EUR-00	UTED-00	H-01	TEDE-00	INR-00	IO-00	L-00
	NSAE-00	OIC-02	OPIC-01	PRS-00	P-00	SP-00	IRM-00
	STR-00	TEST-00	TRSE-00	USIE-00	SNIS-00	NISC-00	PRM-01
	DRL-02	G-00	NFAT-00	SAS-00	/007W		

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FM AMCONSUL HO CHI MINH CITY
TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 5143
INFO AMEMBASSY HANOI PRIORITY
AMEMBASSY VATICAN
AMCONSUL HONG KONG
USMISSION GENEVA
ASEAN COLLECTIVE
USCINCPAC HONOLULU HI
JICPAC HONOLULU HI
SECDEF WASHDC
DIA WASHDC
NSC WASHDC

UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 02 HO CHI MINH CITY 000688

SIPDIS

SENSITIVE

STATE FOR EAP/BCLTV AND EAP/PD/JMARTIN
STATE ALSO FOR DRL/IRF
CINCPAC FOR FPA

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SECDEF FOR ISA/EA/LSTERN

E.O. 12958: N/A
TAGS: PHUM KIRF VM REFFREE HUMANR
SUBJECT: UPDATE ON ARREST OF FATHER NGUYEN VAN LY

REF: A. HCMC 0684 AND PREVIOUS B. HCMC 0603

1C. HANOI 1208

D. HCMC 0273

11. (SBU) SUMMARY: A RELIABLE CATHOLIC SOURCE IN HCMC SAID THAT FATHER NGUYEN VAN LY BEGAN A HUNGER STRIKE WHEN HE WAS ARRESTED ON MAY 17. ON MAY 29 OR MAY 30, POLICE TRANSFERRED HIM FROM JAIL TO A MILITARY HOSPITAL IN HUE. FATHER LY REPORTEDLY REFUSED TO ACCEPT INTRAVENOUS SOLUTIONS, BUT EVENTUALLY CONSENTED TO TAKING WATER MIXED WITH SUGAR AND SALT. FATHER LY REPORTEDLY THUS FAR IS NOT EXPERIENCING ANY SERIOUS HEALTH PROBLEMS AS A RESULT OF HIS HUNGER STRIKE. PHONE LINES TO TWO CATHOLIC PRIESTS IN HUE HAVE BEEN CUT OFF SINCE JUNE 5, BUT THE CATHOLIC SOURCE BELIEVED THIS WAS AN ATTEMPT TO SUPPRESS INFORMATION RELATED TO THE RECENT BUDDHIST PROBLEMS (REF A), AND NOT TO CUT OFF INFORMATION ABOUT FATHER LY. END SUMMARY.

12. (U) REFS B AND C DESCRIBE THE CONFLICTING REPORTS OF CIRCUMSTANCES SURROUNDING THE ARREST OF FATHER LY. BETTER INFORMATION IS NOW AVAILABLE. AT 5:00 A.M. ON MAY 17, SEVERAL POLICEMEN ENTERED THE CHURCH WHERE FATHER LY WAS PREPARING TO SAY MASS. THEY LED HIM AWAY IN FRONT OF THE FEW WORSHIPPERS PRESENT. LATER IN THE MORNING, AS WORD OF THE ARREST SPREAD, WITNESSES SAY THAT 300 TO 500

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PARISHIONERS BEGAN CONGREGATING AT THE CHURCH AND DEMONSTRATING IN SUPPORT OF FATHER LY. AUTHORITIES SENT IN ABOUT 300 SECURITY POLICE TO MAINTAIN ORDER. A FIGHT ENSUED; POLICE USED BATONS AND ELECTRIC PRODS TO MAINTAIN ORDER. WITNESSES SAY THAT POLICE DETAINED APPROXIMATELY 10 PEOPLE FOR FIGHTING WITH THE SECURITY FORCES, BUT IT IS UNKNOWN WHETHER ANY OR ALL OF THEM HAVE BEEN RELEASED.

13. (SBU) ON JUNE 8, POLOFF MET WITH A RELIABLE CATHOLIC SOURCE IN HCMC. THE SOURCE SAID THAT ON MAY 17, POLICE TOOK FATHER LY TO PHU THUA PRISON IN HUE WHERE HE IMMEDIATELY BEGAN A HUNGER STRIKE. AFTER 10 DAYS, HE HAD BECOME VERY WEAK. POLICE TRANSFERRED HIM TO MANH CA MILITARY HOSPITAL IN HUE ON MAY 29 OR 30. HE REPORTEDLY REFUSED INTRAVENOUS FLUIDS, BUT EVENTUALLY CONSENTED TO TAKING WATER MIXED WITH A LITTLE SUGAR AND SALT. AS OF JUNE 5, HE WAS STILL AT THE HOSPITAL. THE SOURCE SAID HE

DID NOT BELIEVE FATHER LY WAS YET IN ANY DANGER OF SERIOUS HEALTH PROBLEMS AS A CONSEQUENCE OF HIS HUNGER STRIKE.

14. (SBU) THE SOURCE NOTED THAT WHILE FATHER LY WAS UNDER HOUSE ARREST, AUTHORITIES TOLD HIGH SCHOOL AND UNIVERSITY STUDENT PARISHIONERS THAT IF THEY ATTENDED FATHER LY'S MASSES, THEY WOULD NOT BE ALLOWED TO ATTEND SCHOOL. THE SOURCE ALSO SAID THAT AS OF JUNE 5, PHONE LINES TO TWO SUPPORTERS OF FATHER LY IN HUE, FATHER NGUYEN HUU GIAI AND FATHER PHAN VAN LOI, HAVE BEEN CUT. HE BELIEVED THIS WAS AN ATTEMPT TO SUPPRESS INFORMATION ON THE CURRENT BUDDHIST PROBLEMS IN THE CITY RATHER THAN AN ATTEMPT TO CUT OFF INFORMATION ABOUT FATHER LY.

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15. (SBU) THE SOURCE SAID THAT THERE HAS BEEN A DEGREE OF COOPERATION AND SUPPORT BETWEEN CATHOLIC AND BUDDHIST "DISSIDENT" CLERGY IN HUE. HE SHOWED POLOFF A PHOTOGRAPH TAKEN FROM THE INTERNET SHOWING FATHER LY, HOA HAO ELDER LE QUANG LIEM, AND HUE-BASED UBCV BUDDHIST MONKS THICH TRAN CHI AND THICH THIEN THANH WHEN THEY MET TOGETHER IN HUE IN FEBRUARY TO ESTABLISH AN INTER-RELIGIOUS BODY OUTSIDE OF GOVERNMENT AUTHORITY. BUT HE ALSO NOTED THAT CATHOLIC BELIEVERS WOULD NEVER SUPPORT THE UBCV BUDDHIST CAUSE, AND THAT BUDDHIST BELIEVERS WOULD NEVER SUPPORT THE CATHOLIC CAUSE, SO THERE WAS LITTLE CHANCE THE TWO GROUPS WOULD EVER COME TOGETHER TO PROTEST GOVERNMENT REPRESSION.

COMMENT

16. (SBU) POST AGREES THAT FOR HISTORICAL AND OTHER REASONS, THE BUDDHIST AND CATHOLIC COMMUNITIES ARE UNLIKELY TO EVER STAND UNITED. IN FACT, IT IS UNLIKELY THAT EVEN MANY CATHOLICS OUTSIDE OF HUE WOULD PUBLICLY SUPPORT FATHER LY'S CAUSE. CERTAINLY MANY VIETNAMESE CATHOLICS PRIVATELY EMPATHIZE WITH FATHER LY'S CRITICAL VIEWS ON GVN RELIGIOUS POLICY, BUT THEY ALSO RECOGNIZE THAT THERE HAS NONETHELESS BEEN PROGRESS ON FREEDOM OF WORSHIP OVER THE PAST 8-10 YEARS. POST BELIEVES VIETNAMESE CATHOLICS BY AND LARGE PREFER A CAUTIOUS DIPLOMATIC APPROACH TO SOLVING THEIR PROBLEMS RATHER THAN RISKING ALL IN A MARTYR'S CAUSE.

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